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On Congregational Singing,
by Rev James Gill,

1841

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AN ADDRESS
TO
THE WESLEYAN METHODISTS
ON
CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

BY THE REV. JAMES GILL.

OUR people are a devotional people: they love psalmody; and were they not hindered by the trifling of the choir, they would produce the finest congregational singing in the world.—REV. RICHARD WATSON.

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WE have read the following Address; and—from the scriptural view which it takes of an interesting and important part of public worship, the Christian spirit it breathes, the research it displays, and the benefit likely to be derived from a serious perusal of it, especially by the members of the Wesleyan societies and congregations—we give it our cordial recommendation.

SAMUEL DUNN,
HENRY HICKMAN,
THOMAS COLLINS.

DUDLEY, *October 2d*, 1841.

AN ADDRESS

C.

I. IN all ages of the world, hymn-singing has formed an important and delightful part of the public worship of Almighty God. Even the Heathen, in their temples, sang the praises of their dumb and lifeless idols. The singing of hymns to Jehovah appears to have been the practice of the patriarchal church ; for, before the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, on the wonderful deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea, “sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord ; and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” It was continued under the Mosaic dispensation : David was the sweet Psalmist of Israel. He composed a great number of psalms, under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for the instruction and edification of the church of God in all ages. He, with Gad the Seer, and Nathan the Prophet, regulated the singing in the sanctuary, and divided the Levites into twenty-four courses for song in the house of the Lord, to give thanks, and to praise the Lord. It seems that females formed a part of the Levitical choir ; for it is said, “God gave to Haman fourteen sons and three daughters, and all these were under the hand of their father, for song in the house of the Lord.”

Our blessed Saviour having instituted the holy sacrament,—having signed, sealed, and sanctioned the New

Testament,—the very next thing He did was, to sing a hymn with his disciples ; and afterwards He went out to the Mount of Olives. At midnight, in the prison of Philippi, Paul and Silas “prayed, and sang praises to God.” That this is a New-Testament duty, is proved also by the following prophecy of the Saviour, quoted by St. Paul : “For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.” And again he saith, “Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.” And again, “Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud him, all ye people.” Again, we are commanded to “teach and admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs ; singing with grace in our hearts unto the Lord.”

That the singing of psalms or hymns was a part of divine worship in those churches formed by the Apostles, is evident from the following expressions : “Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoureth her head.” And, “When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” In the Scriptures, the singing of psalms or hymns is sometimes expressed by prophesying. Samuel said to Saul, “Thou shalt meet a company of Prophets, coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them : and they shall prophesy.” The Chaldee says, “They shall sing, or praise.” “And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them ;” or sing praises to God under the influence of his Holy Spirit. So when David fled to Samuel at Ramah, and Saul sent messengers to take him, when they saw the company of the Prophets prophesying, the Spirit of God was on the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. He sent messengers twice more, and they prophesied.

He then went in person to apprehend David; but the Spirit of God was upon him also; and he went on and prophesied. And he stripped off his clothes, or his royal robes, and prophesied, or praised,—sang praises to God, before Samuel. It is said of Asaph and others, that they should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals; that they prophesied according to the order of the king; that they prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord; and that the children of Haman were for song in the house of the Lord. Therefore, it is evident, that prophesying and singing the praises of God, here specified, were the same things. Again, it is observed, that the prophets of Baal, in their contest with Elijah, “prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice;” that is, they sung hymns to the idol. From this view of the term “prophesy,” it is plain, that in 1 Cor. xi. 4, 5, the Apostle speaks of the ordinary service, in which the whole congregation joined in divine worship; and that the “prophesying” here used, is singing and celebrating the praises of God in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.

The primitive Christians followed the apostolic example in their public assemblies, of singing the praises of Jehovah, when the Apostles were called to their heavenly reward. Pliny, writing to the Emperor Trajan, A. D. 107, giving him an account of the persecuted Christians, says, “that they were wont to meet together on a stated day, before it was light, and sing among themselves, alternately, a hymn to Christ as God.” With great propriety, congregational singing is continued by us, and most Christian churches; and the Scriptures assure us, it will form a part of the delightful, and holy, and glorious worship of the heavenly temple.

II. Congregational singing should be conducted with deep seriousness, and an ardent, devotional spirit. In the hymns we sing, we have confession of sin, gratitude for

mercies received, praise, adoration, expressions of love to God, of joy in the Lord, and of acts of faith in the Saviour. They abound in prayer for the pardon of sin, the witness of the Holy Spirit, and entire sanctification of heart. These hymns should be sung with the spirit, and with the understanding also; under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with an understanding of the matter, sentiments, and doctrines contained in them. David exhorts: "Sing ye praises with understanding." The Apostle teaches us to "sing, making melody in our hearts to the Lord;" and to sing "with grace in our hearts to the Lord." We should labour to call into active exercise those peculiar graces which the matter requires. Let us be careful that our hearts are tuned as Mary's was, when she said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour." God looks at the heart, and how a man is affected within. "Mind," says Cradock, "what is sung; not only that the heart go along with the tongue, but be carefully observant of *what* is sung. Let us apply ourselves to the matter as far as it may concern us. Singing is a work in which more meditation is employed by us than in any other we perform in public. In this, you pray and meditate,—praise and meditate,—speak of the things of God and meditate. God hath ordered this duty, that, while we are employed in it, we feed, and chew the cud together. Meditation is written on the whole duty, and on all parts of it. Our singing is measured in deliberate time, not more for music than for meditation. Set before you one in the posture to sing to the best advantage; his eyes, lifted up to heaven, denote his desire that his heart may be there too; he hath before him a verse of prayer, of mourning, of praise, a mention of God's works: how fairly, now, may his heart spread itself in meditation on the thing, while he is singing it over! He that seeks not, or finds not, this advantage in singing psalms, hath not yet learned what it means. Many things may be spoken of

the excellency of singing psalms : in singing psalms, there is what is in other services, and more. Prayer is our duty ; praise, speaking of God's works, and singing, are our duties ; but this last is all. It is like the holy incense, mixed of all these perfumes. This is a service in which one is cheered from another :—one takes life and warmth from another." There is "a holy fervour and emulation, striving to outvie one another in praising God ; as the seraphim in Isaiah vi. 3: 'One cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.' It is the work of angels, the employment of glorified saints, the music of heaven. I confess, I want words to express the excellency of this duty. He that will sing in heaven, let him learn that divine exercise on earth." Mr. Wesley exhorts : "Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep ; but lift up your voice with strength. Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to this, attend strictly to the sense of what you sing ; and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually. So shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve of here, and reward when he cometh in the clouds of heaven." He also advises the Preachers "to stop short, and ask the people, 'Now, do you know what you said last ? Did you speak no more than you felt ?'"

III. All the congregation should heartily unite in this solemn and joyous part of divine worship.

Every individual has a soul to save ; every individual has an interest in praise, thanksgiving, and prayer ; therefore, every one should join in this important department of divine worship. All mankind are commanded to sing the praises of Jehovah : "O praise the Lord, all ye nations : praise him, all ye people. Make a joyful noise

unto God, all ye lands : sing forth the honour of his name : make his praise glorious. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee ; they shall sing unto thy name. Bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard. Let the people praise thee, O God ; let all the people praise thee !” In the primitive church, all the people bore a part in it. “From the first and apostolical age,” says Bingham, “singing was always a part of divine service in which the whole body of the church joined together.” It is as clear as the sun at noon-day, that the people generally had a share in the psalmody of the ancient church ; and that this was not an exercise confined to the singers, or any particular order in the church ; but that men, women, and children were all allowed to bear a part in it, under the direction and conduct of precentors. They always enjoyed their privileges of joining in this divine harmony, and were encouraged in it by the greatest luminaries of the church. “Singing psalms,” observes Lightfoot, “was a practice in the Christian church from the very beginning. It was the practice to sing in the public congregation, the whole congregation together. As all the congregation joined in prayer with the Minister, and said, ‘Amen ;’ so all the congregation, men and women, joined with him that had and gave the psalm, and sung with him. Fail not to join the congregation in the performance of this duty ; stir up your hearts while you are conversant about it ; say to yourselves, as David to his instrument, ‘Awake, lute and harp ; I myself will awake right early.’ We come to pray together, to hear together, and so profess ourselves Christians together, we being all scholars in the school of Christ ; so in this of singing together more especially ; herein is not only a sign of communion, but also of excitation, as David speaks, when he was at this work : ‘Magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.’ St. Paul says of charity, ‘Charity never faileth ;’ but charity remaineth to go to heaven with us.

So I say of this duty, praise only, of all the services we perform to God here, goes along with us to heaven. There is no praying, no hearing, no receiving sacraments there; nothing but praising, lauding, and celebrating God; and this is the work of saints and angels to all eternity. Amen." Mr. Wesley exhorts, "Sing all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find a blessing." He requires the Preachers to "exhort every one in the congregation to sing, and not one in ten only." The Conference requests that "all will join in singing. The celebrating the praises of the most high God is an important part of divine worship, and a part in which the whole congregation should endeavour, vocally, to join." How delightful the sight, the feeling, arising from a whole congregation engaged from the heart in this heavenly exercise! Where all hearts are thus fervently and cordially united in the praise of Jehovah, there must be the presence of the Lord to heal; there must be the power of God in operation on the hearts of the assembly. It is recorded of St. Austin, that his hearing the heavenly psalms at Milan was one means of his conversion to God; and multitudes beside St. Austin have felt the power of God to save, and convert, and sanctify, while his people have been joining with one heart and one voice in singing his praises. At the dedication of Solomon's temple, "it came to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were, as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets, and the cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, 'For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever!' that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the Priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God."

The first Christians performed this part of divine

service standing. Bingham observes: "We are to consider that psalmody was always esteemed a considerable part of devotion; and upon that account was usually, if not always, performed in a standing posture." St. Austin speaks of psalmody "as an act of devotion which all the people performed standing in the church." "I stand," says Mr. Wesley, "whenever I sing the praise of God in public. Does not the Bible give you plain precedents for this?" The Conference remarks, that "it is very indecorous not to stand up on so solemn an occasion as that of celebrating the praises of the most high God." Again: "We request that all our chapels may be furnished with hassocks, or with kneeling-boards; so that every excuse may be taken away from those who persist in the irreverent and unscriptural custom of sitting while at prayer. We desire that all our Preachers will strongly urge on their congregations, the propriety and importance of standing while they sing the praises of God."

IV. The tunes brought into the congregation should be of the simple and grave kind, calculated to affect the heart, and kindle a warm, devotional feeling through the assembly.

The hymns of the primitive Christians were set to music; but the tunes appear to have been the most simple and melodious. Lord King observes: "The primitive singing was in good tune and concert. All that they looked after was to sing in rhyme, metre, tune, and concert; to offer up unto God the praises of their voices, lips, and mouths." At the commencement of Methodism, the congregational singing was simple, grave, and melodious. Mr. Wesley published a piece on the grounds of vocal music; and collected tunes at four different times for the hymns he had published, the last of which he denominated "Sacred Melody." He was an ardent lover of melody. "I was much surprised," he observes, "in read-

ing an 'Essay on Music,' wrote by one who is a thorough master of the subject, to find that the music of the ancients was as simple as that of the Methodists ; that their music wholly consisted of melody, or the arrangement of single notes ; that what is now called harmony, singing in parts, the whole of counterpoint and fugues, is quite novel, being never known in the world till the Popedom of Leo X., A.D. 1512." In his "Thoughts on the Power of Music," he says, "We are told, the ancient Greek musicians were able to excite whatever passions they pleased ; to inspire love or hate, joy or sorrow, hope or fear, courage, fury, or despair ; yea, to raise these one after another, and to vary the passions just according to the variation of the music. But why is it that modern music in general has no such effect on the hearers ? The grand reason seems to be no other than this,—the whole nature and design of music is altered. The ancient composers studied melody alone ; the due arrangement of single notes ; and it was by melody alone that they wrought such wonderful effects. And as this music was directly calculated to move the passions, so they designed it for that very end. But the modern composers study harmony, which, in the present sense of the word, is quite another thing ; namely, a contrast of various notes, opposite to, and yet blended with, each other ; wherein they, now high, now low, pursue the resonant fugue. Dr. Gregory says, 'This harmony has been known in the world little more than two hundred years.' Be that as it may, ever since it was introduced, ever since counterpoint has been invented, as it has altered the grand design of music, so it has well nigh destroyed its effects." In his Journal, he says, "I spent an hour or two with Dr. Pepusch, who was well versed in the music of antiquity, perhaps the best of any man in Europe. He asserted, that the art of music is lost : that the ancients only understood it in its perfection : that it was revived a little in the reign of King Henry VIII., by

Tallys and his contemporaries ; as also in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who was a judge and patroness of it : that, after her reign, it sunk for sixty or seventy years, till Purcell made some attempts to restore it : but that, ever since, the true ancient art, depending on nature and mathematical principles, had gained no ground ; the present masters having no fixed principles at all."

In the fourth century, "some disorders and irregularities," says Bingham, "crept into the practice of singing, and corrupted the psalmody and devotions of the church." Against these, the Fathers frequently declaim, with many sharp and severe invectives. Chiefly they complain of the lightness and vain curiosity which some used in singing, who took their measures from the practice of the theatres : introducing from thence the corruption and effeminacy of secular music into the grave and solemn devotions of the church. St. Jerome, on those words of the Apostle, (Eph. v. 19,) makes this reflection : "Let young men hear this, let those hear it who have the office of singing in the church, that they sing not with their voice, but with their heart to the Lord ; not like tragedians, physically preparing their throats and mouths, that they may sing after the fashion of the theatre in the church. He that has but an ill voice, if he has good works, is a sweet singer before God." The other vice complained of, was the paying more regard to the music of the words, and sweetness of the composure, than to the sense and meaning of them ; pleasing the ear, without raising the affections of the soul ; which was the great design which psalmody and music were intended to promote. St. Jerome takes notice of this corruption, giving this caution against it : "Let the servant of Christ so order his singing, that the words which are read may please more than the voice of the singer ; that the spirit which was in Saul, may be cast out of them who are possessed with it, and not find admittance in those who have turned the house of God into a stage and theatre of

the people." Chrysostom complains of men's using theatrical noise and gestures, both in their prayers and hymns. In one of his homilies to this purpose, he exclaims: "O unhappy wretch, thou oughtest with reverence and fear to send up the angelical hymn, and with trembling make confession to God, and thereby ask pardon for thy offences! Instead of this, thou bringest into the church the manners of mimics and dancers, by a disorderly tossing up the hands, and beating with thy feet, and agitation of thy whole body. Dost thou not consider, that the Lord himself is present, who measures every man's motions, and examines their consciences? Thy mind is blinded with what thou hast heard and seen in the theatres; and the things which are done there, thou bringest into the rites and ceremonies of the church."

In Mr. Wesley's life-time, corruptions of a somewhat similar nature made their appearance in some places among the Methodists: hence, in 1781, on his preaching at Warrington, he says, "I came just in time to put a stop to a bad custom, which was creeping in here: a few men, who had fine voices, sang a psalm, which no one knew, in a tune fit for an opera, wherein three, four, or five persons sung different words at the same time. What an insult upon common sense! What a burlesque upon public worship! No custom can excuse such a mixture of profaneness and absurdity." In the Minutes of Conference he exclaims: "Beware of formality in singing, or it will creep in upon us unawares. Is it not creeping in already, by those complex tunes, which it is scarce possible to sing with devotion? Such is, 'Praise the Lord, ye blessed ones!' Such the long quavering hallelujah, annexed to the Morning-song tune, which I defy any man living to sing devoutly. The repeating the same words so often, but especially while another repeats different words, (the horrid abuse which runs through the modern church-music,) as it shocks all common sense,

so it necessarily brings in dead formality, and has no more of religion in it than a Lancashire hornpipe. Beside that, it is a flat contradiction to our Lord's command, 'Use not vain repetitions.' For what is vain repetition, if this is not? What end of devotion does it serve?"

Again: "Do not suffer the people to sing too slow. This naturally tends to formality, and is brought in by those who have very strong or very weak voices. Is it not possible, that all the Methodists in the nation should sing equally quick?" "Sing in time. Do not run before, nor stay behind, it. And take care you sing not too slow. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from among us, and sing all our tunes just as quick as we did at first. Why should not the Assistant (Superintendent) see that they are taught to sing in every large society? and do this in such a manner, as to obviate the ill effects, which might otherwise spring therefrom?"

In the Minutes of Conference, 1805, we find the following directions: "Let no pieces, as they are called, in which recitatives by single men, solos by single women, fuguing, (or different words sung by different persons at the same time,) are introduced, be sung in our chapels. Let the original, simple, grave, and devotional style be carefully preserved, which, instead of drawing the attention to singing and the singers, is so admirably calculated to draw off the attention from both, and to raise the soul to God only." Again: "Let the excellent paper, inserted by Mr. Wesley in the Arminian Magazine for 1781, and entitled, 'Thoughts on the Power of Music,' be immediately reprinted in the Magazine, and also published in a separate form, that copies may be sent to every Circuit. And let the Preachers promote, as much as possible, the restoration, in our public singing, of the style of music which that paper recommends, and which is exemplified in many of our best and oldest tunes."

The sentiments of Dr. Watts on congregational singing

appear to accord with those of Mr. Wesley and the Conference. He observes: "It were to be wished, that we might not dwell so long upon every single note, and produce the syllables to such a tiresome extent, with a constant uniformity of time; which disgraces the music, and puts the congregation quite out of breath in singing five or six stanzas; whereas, if the method of singing were but reformed to a greater speed in pronunciation, we might often enjoy the pleasure of a longer psalm, with less expense of time and breath; and our psalmody would be more agreeable to the ancient churches', more intelligible to others, and more delightful to ourselves." Dr. Clarke, speaking of the singing of the ancient Christians, says: "I rather suppose that their singing consisted in solemn, well-measured *recitativo*, than in the jingling, and often foolish, sounds which we hear, when a single monosyllable is sometimes shivered into thirty-six demi-semiquavers."

The singing of anthems is discountenanced by Mr. Wesley and the Conference, because the whole congregation cannot join therein. "Let no anthems be introduced into our chapels, or preaching-houses, for the time to come, because they cannot properly be called joint-worship." "Let no anthems be introduced into our chapels, unless on extraordinary occasions, and with the consent of the Superintendent, because they cannot properly be called joint-worship." And, in 1799, after again enforcing Mr. Wesley's Minutes on congregational singing generally, the Conference concludes the Minute with, "Sing no anthems."

V. Instrumental music was not in use in the primitive church.

A variety of instruments were employed in the temple-worship at Jerusalem, under the dispensation of Moses; but there is not a single word in the New Testament recommending instrumental music under the Christian

dispensation. Our blessed Lord used none, when singing a hymn with his disciples. The New Testament commands singing as a part of divine worship: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord." But it does not recommend the employment of instrumental music in the worship of the blessed God. The primitive Christians set their hymns to music, and sang them with the voice; but instrumental music was not known in their churches.

Lord King observes: "As for church-music, for organs, and the like, those primitive ages were wholly ignorant of them; for it cannot rationally be conceived, that, in those days of continual persecution or violence, they could either use or preserve them: all that they looked after was, to sing in rhyme, metre, time, and concert, to offer up unto God the praises of their voices, lips, and mouths, which Clemens Alexandrinus thinks was emblemized, or shadowed forth, by those musical instruments mentioned in Psalm cl."

"The use of instrumental music in public worship," says Jennings, "was one of the typical ceremonies of the Jewish religion; which is abrogated, therefore, with the rest, by the Gospel dispensation, and there is no revival of this institution in the New Testament. The ancient Fathers were so far from practising or approving instrumental music in Christian worship, that some of them would hardly allow it was used in the Jewish, but put allegorical interpretations on the texts that mention it. St. Basil calls musical instruments the invention of Jubal, of the race of Cain. That musical instruments were not used even in the Popish Church in Thomas Aquinas's time, (about the year 1250,) appears from this passage in his questions: 'In the old law, God was praised both with musical instruments and human voices; but the Christian church does not use instruments to praise

him, lest she should seem to Judaize.' So that it seems, instrumental music hath been introduced into Christian worship, within about the last five hundred years, in the darkest and most corrupt times of Popery."

Music in churches is as ancient as the Apostles; but instrumental music is not so: there was no such thing as an organ in use in the ancient church for many ages. For it is now generally agreed, by learned men, that the use of organs came into the church, since the time of Thomas Aquinas, A.D. 1250. Wharton has observed, that Marinus Sanutus, who lived about the year 1290, was the first that brought the use of wind-organs into churches; whence he was surnamed *Torcellus*, which is the name for an organ in the Italian tongue. The use of the instrument is much more ancient, but not in church-service. It was used in the east in the Emperors' courts, perhaps, from the time of Julian; but in the western parts, the instrument was not so much as known till the eighth century. For the first organ that was ever seen in France, was one sent as a present to King Pepin by Constantinus Copronymus, the Greek Emperor, A.D. 766. Chrysostom says, "Instrumental music was only permitted to the Jews, as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls; God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols. But now, instead of organs, we may use our own bodies to praise him." Theodoret has many similar expressions. Justin Martyr says, "The use of singing, joined with instrumental music, was not received in the Christian churches as it was among the Jews in their infant state; but only the use of plain song." "The organ," Jennings remarks, "was only used in Princes' courts, and not yet brought into churches. Nor was it ever received into the Greek churches, there being no mention of an organ in all their Liturgies, ancient or modern, if Mr. Gregory's judgment may be taken." "The Greek or eastern church is the most ancient of all churches, and spreads over a

vast extent of territory in Greece, the Grecian islands, Wallachia, Sclavonia, Moldavia, Egypt, Nubia, Libya, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Cilicia, and Palestine; including, it is supposed, about thirty millions of souls; but they have no instrumental music in their churches."

The Church of England, after her Reformation from Popery, strongly remonstrates against the use of organs and other instruments of music in churches. In the Homily on the Place and Time of Prayer, we have the following expressions: "Much wicked people pass nothing to resort to the church, either for that they are so sore blinded, that they understand nothing of God and godliness, or else for that they see the church altogether scoured of such gay, gazing sights as their gross fantasy was greatly delighted with; because they see the false religion abandoned, and the true restored, which seemeth an unsavoury thing to their unsavoury taste; as may appear by this, that a woman said to her neighbour: 'Alas! gossip, what shall we do at church, since all the saints are taken away, since all the goodly sights we were wont to have are gone, since we cannot hear the like piping, singing, chanting, and playing upon the organs that we could before?' But, dearly beloved, we ought greatly to rejoice and give God thanks, that our churches are delivered out of all these things which displeased God so sore, and filthily defiled his holy house, and place of prayer."

Methodism bears a near resemblance to the practice of the primitive church. There are only two instruments allowed in the Methodist chapels; namely, a bass-viol and an organ: every other instrument of music employed in our chapels is in direct opposition to the standing rules of the Connexion. At the Conference, in 1800, it was asked, "Can any thing be done to prevent what appears to us a great evil? namely, bands of music and theatrical singers being brought into our chapels when charity sermons are to be preached. Answer: Let none in our

Connexion preach charity sermons where such persons and such music are introduced. And let Stewards, Trustees, and Leaders be informed, that such a practice is offensive to the Conference, who believe it has been hurtful to the minds of many pious persons." In 1805, it was asked, "Are any regulations necessary with regard to singing? Answer: Let no instruments of music be introduced into the singers' seats, except a bass-viol, should the principal singer require it. Let no musical festivals, or, as they are sometimes termed, 'selections of sacred music,' be either encouraged or permitted in any of our chapels; in which performances the genuine dignity of spiritual worship is grossly abused under the pretence of getting money for charitable purposes. Let no Preacher suffer any thing to be done in the chapel where he officiates, but what is according to the established usages of Methodism; knowing that he is accountable to God for whatever he does, or permits to be done, during the times he is in possession of the pulpit. Let no Preacher, therefore, suffer his right to conduct every part of the worship of Almighty God to be infringed on, either by singers or others; but let him sacredly preserve and calmly maintain his authority; as he who sacrifices this, sacrifices not only Methodism, but the spirit and design of Christianity." In 1815, it was asked, "What directions are necessary with respect to our congregational singing? Answer: 1. Let no singing be allowed in any of our chapels after the public service has been regularly closed by the officiating Preacher; as we think that singing at such times tends to extinguish the spirit of devotion, and to destroy those serious impressions which may have been made on the congregation by the previous ministry of God's word. 2. Let our Rules, respecting singing, and especially those which restrict the use of instrumental music in our public worship, as published in our Minutes for 1805, be uniformly enforced. 3. Let our Preachers take care to examine the hymns which are

to be sung in our chapels when charity sermons are to be preached, or on other particular occasions: and let them reject all those which are not decidedly unobjectionable in point of sentiment and poetry; and we earnestly recommend that our own authorized Hymns be generally preferred for all such purposes."

Respecting the employment of organs in our chapels, great caution has been marked in their introduction. The Minutes of 1796 request, "Let no organ be placed any where till proposed in the Conference." In the year 1808, the erection of organs is prohibited; declaring, "The Conference judge it expedient to refuse, after this present year, their sanction or consent to the erection of any organ in our chapels." In the year 1820, the use of organs was re-considered; and it was asked, "What is the decision of the Conference on the erection of organs in our chapels? Answer: We think that in some of the larger chapels, where some instrumental music may be deemed expedient in order to guide the congregational singing, organs may be allowed, by special consent of the Conference; but every application for such consent shall be first made at the District-Meeting; and, if it obtain their sanction, shall then be referred to a Committee at the Conference, who shall report their opinion as to the propriety of acceding to the request, and also as to the restrictions with which the permission to erect an organ ought, in that particular case, to be accompanied." The general restrictions are thus recorded: "Where organs have been already introduced, the Conference requires that they shall be so used as not to overpower or supersede, but only to assist, our congregational singing; and that they shall be considered as under the control of the Superintendent, or of the officiating Preacher for the time being, whose right and duty it is to conduct every part of the public worship of God. Let no voluntaries be played during the time of divine service."

We see, from the above statements, that great caution

has been observed by the Conference in permitting the use of instrumental music in our public worship; and that the only instruments allowed are the bass-viol and the organ, and these under particular restrictions. But notwithstanding the repeated precepts of our venerable Founder, and the Rules enacted by the Conference in successive years, it is to be lamented that, in some places, these admirable precepts and rules are neglected, and too great complexity in the tunes, and excess of instrumental music, are still found in our public worship. Perhaps some blame attaches to ourselves as Ministers, in not carrying out, to their full effect, the precepts of our Founder, and the Minutes of the Conference. This was evidently the view taken by the late and greatly respected Richard Watson; who, in speaking of the character of congregational singing not being generally improved, says, "One great reason of this evil has been the inattention of Ministers themselves to this part of the service of the sanctuary; for what primitive Bishops and General Councils did not think it unimportant to regulate or improve, has been too often left among us to the leaders of tunes, and to choirs of singers."

Those eminent men, Ignatius of Antioch, Basil of Cæsarea, Ambrose of Milan, Chrysostom of Constantinople, and St. Augustine of Hippo, appear to have taken great interest in improving the singing in their churches; and many other Bishops, who formed the general or particular Councils in various ages of the Christian era. Several Councils enacted canons respecting singers. In the Council of Laodicea, singers were forbidden to go to a public-house. In the Council of Chalcedon, they were forbidden to marry heterodox wives. The Council of Trullus says, "Let singers in the church avoid all yellings and vociferations, and do their business with attention and affection."

VI. Our own tunes should form a considerable part of those which are used in the congregation.

It has been observed, that Mr. Wesley published "the Grounds of Vocal Music," and several collections of tunes, for the use of his congregations ; the last of which he denominated "Sacred Melody," or "A choice Collection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes." In his preface to "Select Hymns, with Tunes annexed," 1765, he says, "I have been endeavouring for more than twenty years to procure such a book as this ; but in vain. Masters of music were above following any directions but their own. And I was determined, whoever compiled this, should follow my directions, not mending our tunes, but setting them down neither better nor worse than they were. At length I have prevailed. They are pricked true, exactly as I desire all our congregations to sing them." His tunes have been revised, corrected, and reprinted, under the following title : "Sacred Harmony : a Set of Tunes, collected by the late Rev. John Wesley, M. A., for the Use of the Congregations in his Connexion : a new Edition, carefully revised and corrected by his Nephew, Charles Wesley, Esquire, Organist to his Majesty George the Fourth." In the Minutes of 1765, Mr. W. asks, "What can be done to make the people sing better? Answer. Teach them to sing by note, and to sing our tunes first." In the Minutes of 1796, the Conference enforces, "Recommend our tune-book every where. We agree with our late reverend father, that our own tunes should be learned and sung in preference to others, as in these the whole congregation can in general join." In 1815, the Preachers were enjoined "to promote the style of singing recommended in Mr. Wesley's paper on the Power of Music, which is exemplified in many of our best and oldest tunes.

Mr. Watson wrote an admirable preface to "Sacred Harmony," which is published in the Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine for 1822, which the then Editor, Dr. Bunting, denominates "an able piece." An extract will be acceptable to the reader. "Many of the airs of the 'Sacred Harmony' have fallen into disuse, which, for their intrinsic

excellence, ought never to have been displaced as standard congregational tunes ; and the whole forms a body of sacred music which has no ordinary claims, both from its general style, and the name of its compiler, to be regarded as the guide of our taste and practice in this department of our devotional services, in public and in our families. Certain it is, that since the airs in the 'Sacred Harmony' have been suffered to fall into neglect and oblivion, the character of our congregational singing has not generally improved. In those ages when poetry and music jointly produced their most powerful effects, harmony, or counterpoint, was unknown ; and the effect was produced by the sweetness and simplicity, or the nobleness and spirit, of the air, giving emphasis to the conceptions of the poet, by corresponding with them. There is an immutable truth in nature ; and it is in the melody, or air, that we are still to look for the true power of music to excite emotion, and to give effect to poetry. Simplicity excludes not genius, but is the effect of it ; and those modulations which form the best examples of psalmody, are all the productions of eminent genius, under the guidance of a proper sense of what is fit and becoming in the worship of God. Such must have been the airs in which the primitive Christians celebrated the praises of Christ ; for Pagans were attracted by their singing to their churches, and were often deeply and effectually wrought upon by the service. Neither genius in composition, nor skill in execution, is therefore discouraged by the recommendation of simplicity in singing. This is a common mistake. It is in complex airs that genius is usually most absent, and in a rattling and noisy execution that skill in execution is least employed."

No new tunes should be brought into the congregation before the old tunes are well known, and then with considerable prudence and caution. If new tunes are often brought into the congregation, in which the people cannot join, the worship of the blessed God is marred, the devo-

tion of the congregation receives a check, and many serious people are grieved and offended. Mr. Wesley says, "I advise the Preachers to introduce no new tunes." Again he says, "Introduce no new tunes till they are perfect in the old." Mr. Watson observes: "All new tunes ought to be tried, and admitted or rejected by those to whom God has given the charge of his courts; and who are responsible, both to Him and to the public, for the manner in which public psalmody is conducted." Mr. Wesley also enforces, "Suit the tune to the nature of the hymn." From the repeated advices given, to recommend our own tunes every where, to suit the tunes to the nature of the hymns, to prevent formality, to form our style of singing on the model of his "Thoughts on the Power of Music," it is evident that Mr. Wesley was deeply interested in our congregational singing; and that he ardently desired to preserve it in simplicity, gravity, and melody. And, as Mr. Wesley's family were eminent for their knowledge of music, and as he himself well understood it, surely, great respect and deference ought to be observed to the judgment, advice, and request of our venerable Founder in this department of our public service.

VII. In large congregations, to preserve order, it appears needful for some person or persons to be appointed to conduct and lead the singing. In the primitive church, it seems that the Minister, or some individual in the congregation, acquainted with a suitable tune, pitched it. And, "when it was found by experience, that the negligence and unskilfulness of the people rendered them unfit to perform this service, without some one more skilful to guide and assist them, then a peculiar order of men were appointed and set over this business, with a design to retrieve and improve the ancient psalmody, and to regulate and encourage the psalmody of the church. The first rise and institution of these singers seems to have been about the beginning of the fourth century; for the Coun-

cil of Laodicea is the first that mentions them. Unless any one thinks, perhaps, the apostolical canons to be a little more ancient. And from this time these were called Canonical Singers; that is, such as were entered into the canon, or catalogue, of the Clergy, which distinguished them from the body of the church. These Canonical Singers were also called Monitors, or Suggestors, from their office, which was, to be a sort of Precentors to the people." In the commencement of Methodism, the Preacher generally pitched the tune in the congregation. Hence Mr. Wesley requests the Preachers: "If you cannot sing yourself, choose a person or two in each place to pitch the tune for you." This choosing one or two persons in each place by the Preacher, to pitch the tune for him, was the beginning of the formation of a choir. And as the congregation and society increased in any particular town or large village, a certain number of persons were appointed as singers in the chapels, to guide and lead the congregation in this department of divine worship, or to be Monitors, or Precentors, to the audience.

VIII. Those persons who are appointed to lead the singing in the congregations of God's people, should be spiritually minded, and of good report for piety.

Those persons who are not converted, who are not truly pious, not spiritual, are incapable of understanding the holy language of our hymns. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." They cannot see, cannot taste, cannot feel, the spiritual, evangelical sentiments of our hymns; and of course are utterly unqualified to lead and conduct this spiritual, solemn, and delightful part of divine worship. For "unto the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words

behind thee." Such persons must fall under that awful censure, pronounced by the blessed Saviour, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draw near to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." If it be necessary that Prayer-Leaders should be converted, who are appointed to offer up prayer in small assemblies, surely it is necessary that those persons who are appointed to conduct and lead the spiritual and holy service of singing in large congregations should also be converted: or how can they express those sentiments in our hymns, which breathe such longing and ardent desires for the pardon of sin, for holiness of heart, for close union and fellowship with God, and at the same time speak the truth in righteousness? "Let thy end in singing be, that God may be glorified, thyself and others edified; that the graces of God's Spirit may be excited and exercised in thyself and others." The Leaders of singing, surely, should sing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord. And "to sing with grace, is to exercise the graces of the heart in singing; we must sing with joy, with trust in God's mercies, with a holy commemoration of God's benefits, yea, with the prayer and desire of our hearts, that our words in singing may be acceptable. We must sing, not with our tongues only for ostentation, but with our hearts. To sing with our hearts, is to sing with understanding, with sense and feeling. We must sing to the Lord, that is, both to God's glory and in a sense of God's presence, and upon a holy remembrance of God's blessings." "In singing psalms and spiritual songs," says Elton, "our hearts must go with our voices and tongues; our singing must not only be with the voice or rise from the throat, but it must proceed from the depth of the heart: we must sing with understanding, and with a holy feeling in our hearts. It is in singing psalms as it is in praying; for many times psalms and prayer have the same matter, and differ only in the

manner of uttering. In prayer, the heart must be lifted up: so it ought to be in singing; the heart must be stirred up and affected, according to the matter that is sung; else is the singing but lip-labour, and displeasing to God. Dost thou, when singing, lift up thy heart and soul to the Lord in heaven? Come to that holy exercise prepared; and if thou ask me, when thy heart is prepared, I answer, When the assurance of thy sins pardoned, the persuasion of God's favour toward thee, the hatred of thy sins, the love of the life to come, do stir thee up to the singing of psalms. And look that thy heart be thus tuned and prepared, that thy singing may come from the inward affection of thy heart, as the chief instrument of that heavenly music."

Bayne says, that "in singing we must not bring our voice alone, but our heart, unto God. 'My soul shall magnify the Lord, and my spirit shall rejoice in God my Saviour.' 'O my soul, praise the Lord.' He that will sing aright, must with the use of his psalm join sense, understand it with sense, affection, exultation with gravity. Get the Spirit; till we play on this organ, there is no music in God's ear. God is a Spirit, and he will be worshipped in spirit. The Lord detests empty sounds. It is odious to his ear, to hear the din of them. He says, 'Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.' As he that will make music must tune his instrument, so we must tune our hearts, a kind of instrument that is strung with affections, or all will be an unpleasant discord in the ear of God."

If these views are just, if they are correct, if they are scriptural, what need there is of great carefulness in furnishing the singing-seat with suitable persons for this department of divine worship, that no offence may be given to any serious individuals in the congregation! To avoid this, and to preserve the singing in its proper spiritual character, the persons engaged as singers

should be selected from the members of society ; and ought to be persons of genuine piety, and good report.

The behaviour of the singers during the whole period of divine worship is of great importance : it should manifest the greatest decorum and gravity. There should be no trifling ; no turning over the leaves of the tune-book in the time of prayer or preaching ; for, as they are generally placed in a conspicuous situation, the eyes of the congregation are upon them, and more especially the eyes of Almighty God. They should be patterns of seriousness, examples of devotion, to the whole audience ; entering into every part of divine worship with attention and a fervent spirit. On this subject we have the following minute of Conference : “ Though it is our privilege and duty to set God always before us, we should manifest our sense of his divine presence on all occasions, when we join in solemnly addressing him in public company, by our actions, as well as words. The evil of neglecting this is so great, that we trust there are but very few whom it concerns. But such as it does concern, we must exhort to flee from the wrath to come. If they have no savour for the word of God, they can have no savour of God himself.”

IX. The singers, who lead the congregation, should be regularly appointed to their office by the proper authorities of the church.

No persons can be self-appointed to any official situation in the church ; because the church is the city of God, the inheritance of God, the family of God ; and in this city, in this family, there must be order. The command is, “ Let all things be done decently and in order. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” To these same Corinthians, the Apostle says, “ And the rest will I set in order when I come.” To Titus he says, “ For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things which

are wanting, and ordain Elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." We see, by these scriptures, that God has given the charge of his courts to his Ministers. They are to regulate, establish, and put in order, all things in the house of God, both as respects doctrine and discipline. Here the Apostle appoints Titus to settle the discipline in the churches, set in order the things which were wanting, to ordain Elders, and fix proper officers in every department of the church of the living God, whose character and qualifications he describes.

All the officers in the church, of every grade, must be regularly appointed. Among us, Tract-Distributors, Missionary-Collectors, Sunday-School officers, Prayer-Leaders, Class-Leaders, Local-Preachers, Stewards, and Preachers, are all appointed to their respective offices by the Connexional authorities. To be self-appointed to an office in the church of God, is an anomaly ; it is an absurdity ; it is opposed to order ; and such persons cannot be acknowledged by the members of the church as a legitimate part of God's family. The singers, therefore, who lead the congregation in the solemn worship of Almighty God, cannot be self-appointed. This practice would be filling up an important office in the church independent of the church, unauthorized, and unacknowledged by the members of the church ; and, of course, there could be no union, no fellowship, no proper understanding between such persons and the regular officers and members of the church ; and instead of harmony there must be distance, confusion, and discord.

In primitive times, the singers were solemnly appointed to their office by the Ministers of the church : "The manner of their designation to this office agreed with all the inferior orders, that it required no imposition of hands or solemn consecration, such as was used in the consecration of Ministers. Most of the orders were conferred by the Bishop, or ruling Pastor ; but this designation might be conferred by a Presbyter, equal to the

Bishop in respect of order, a Minister of the sanctuary, but not the Superintendent of the church. The form of words used on this occasion are found in the Canon of the fourth Council of Carthage, and are very appropriate and impressive; namely, 'See that thou believe in thy heart, what thou singest with thy mouth; and approve in thy works, what thou believest in thy heart.' It were to be wished, that something of a similar kind were adopted by our Connexion, in appointing our singers to the sacred employment of conducting this part of the worship of the blessed God.

In the Wesleyan section of the church, as in the primitive church, the appointment of the singers devolves on the ministerial office. At the commencement of Methodism we have seen that, if a Preacher could not sing himself, Mr. Wesley requested him to select two or three persons in every place to pitch the tune for him. This was the foundation of forming choirs to lead the singing in our congregations, which was by the selection and appointment of the Minister. The following are Mr. Wesley's requests: "Learn to sing true yourselves. Teach them to sing by note. Take care they do not sing too slow. Let no anthems be sung in our chapels. Why should not the Assistant see that they be taught to sing in every large society; and do it in such a manner as to obviate ill effects?" They are given to the Preacher to carry into operation; and he requires the Preachers to "be conscientiously exact in the whole Methodist discipline." All the preceding rules respecting singing, which the Conference has enacted since the death of our Founder, are committed to the Preachers, that they may fully carry them out into practice.

But the Superintendent is the principal authorized agent to execute, or to see executed, all the rules, regulations, and discipline of the Connexion. He is appointed by the Conference to take the charge of all the societies in his Circuit, and of the other Preachers therein; he

is responsible to the Conference for the proper and faithful exercise and accomplishment of the whole discipline of the Body, in that Circuit to which he is appointed. It is the business of the Superintendent to appoint all the officers, of every description, in his Circuit. It is true, there are salutary checks or vetos given by the Conference to the Leaders', Quarterly, and Local Preachers' Meetings; but the appointment to office, or, as we usually call it, "nomination to office," is with the Superintendent. And, of course, it is his proper work to appoint the singers to their office; and, without such appointment or acknowledgment by the Superintendent, the singers are unauthorized in their office, and form no part of the church.

In the year 1827, the Conference determined "that the officers in our Sunday-schools should be selected from the members of the Methodist society; and, before their final appointment to office, should be proposed and approved in the Leaders'-Meeting of the society to which the School is attached. And that no person should be continued as a Teacher, who shall be declared by the Leaders'-Meeting ineligible, in point of general character or of religious opinions." This rule incorporates them with the church, brings them into fellowship and union with the Pastors and members of the church; so that they are a part of the family of God, are partakers of its privileges and blessings, and are objects of its prayers, its solicitous care, and love. If the Superintendent thought proper, it appears to me, that a similar plan would be advisable respecting the singers. He might present their names to the Leaders'-Meeting for their approval; and thus every new member, before forming a part of the choir, might be approved by the Leaders'-Meeting. If such a plan were adopted, the singers would then be regularly authorized by the church, would form a part of it, would be generally known and acknowledged as members of the same society, which would be

the means of union, harmony, affection, and kind and brotherly feeling between them, and all the officers and members of the church; and, at the same time, would be a great comfort and satisfaction to the singers themselves.

We, therefore, most importunately and affectionately beseech the singers, every where, to join the church, to become members of the society, to incorporate themselves with the household of faith and family of God. Because it is the duty of every Christian, yea, of every individual, where the Gospel is preached, to unite with the church; the Gospel is the voice of God calling every soul to the fellowship of his Son. The establishment of the Sabbath, Christian ordinances, the Christian ministry, are all designed by the blessed God to increase the number of his family, as well as to feed and nourish it to eternal life.

If one person has a right to abstain from church-fellowship, then every one has an equal right; and if all persons abstain from church-fellowship, then there will be no church in the world; and (the church being the evangelical nursery for training the ministry in Christian principles, doctrines, and experience,) there will be no Christian ministry in the world: then Christianity must be ruined, the world fall into a state of savagism, and millions of precious souls become a prey to the wicked one.

Let it be observed, that the blessed God knows none upon earth but friends and enemies. His friends make an open profession of his name by joining the church; they throw all their influence into Christianity, to promote the glory of God their Saviour; and he encourages them by saying, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of

hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." There is no neutral ground between the church and the world. The blessed Saviour affirms : " He that is not with me, is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad."

There are very many Christian duties peremptorily pressed upon us in the Gospel, for the neglect of which we must give an account at the day of judgment ; but we cannot fulfil these duties while we separate ourselves from the fellowship of the church of God. Such are the following : " Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus ; that ye may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify God." " Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another." " Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." " Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." " Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." " Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned, and avoid them."

The privileges of church-membership are exceedingly interesting and important, because the church is dear to Christ ; he loves it, and has purchased it with his own precious blood ; he gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The union between Christ and his church is very tender, intimate, and precious ; he is the head of his body the church, and Christians are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. He is the true vine, and

believers are the branches, deriving all their grace, support, and comfort from Him. He is the Foundation on which the church, a glorious spiritual temple, rests, and the Chief Corner-Stone, uniting the building together; and the members of the church are lively stones, forming this spiritual house, receiving their spiritual life and happiness from the Living Foundation, who is the resurrection and the life, the source of life to all created beings. He is the Bridegroom, and the church is his bride, the wife of the Lamb. He has espoused her to himself, and will, at the appointed time, take her home to the heavenly Jerusalem, where she shall for ever live in his presence, and enjoy his favour. For these high, holy, and encouraging reasons, and many more that might be adduced, we conclude, by most seriously entreating all those persons who are statedly leading the congregations of the Lord in singing his praises, to unite with the family of God in church-membership.

THE END.

